COLOCATIONQUOTES

Data Center Checklist

Evaluate and compare colocation providers and facilities side by side: 90 items across 15 sections, including high-density AI and liquid cooling, current compliance standards, red flags, documents to request and tour questions.

How to use it. Write a provider in each column (A, B and C). Score every item: **0** not offered or not verified, **1** partial, **2** meets your need, **3** exceeds it and is documented. Skip items that do not apply. Each section score is the average of the items you scored. Then weight the sections in the scorecard for what matters to your deployment. Verify claims with documents and a tour; a provider's website is not evidence.

Red flags that should stop a deal

- Capacity marketed as available with no utility agreement or energization date
- Compliance reports that are old, cover a different facility, or are offered only as logos
- A Tier claim based on design only, with no constructed-facility certification
- No written SLA, or credits limited to a fraction of the power charge
- Liquid cooling described as planned or available on request, with no live deployment
- No outage history or reason-for-outage reports on request
- A delivery path that cannot fit or carry your racks
- Billing that starts before your space is accepted

Documents to request before you sign

- SOC 2 Type II and SOC 1 Type II reports, plus bridge letters
- ISO/IEC 27001:2022 certificate and scope
- PCI DSS v4.0.1 attestation of compliance
- Uptime Institute or TIA-942 certificates
- SLA, master agreement and sample service order
- One-line electrical and mechanical diagrams (under NDA)
- Outage history and recent reason-for-outage reports
- Generator and UPS test records
- Floor loading and delivery path specifications
- Liquid cooling specifications and responsibility matrix
- Insurance certificate
- Customer references

Questions to ask on the site tour

- Walk the delivery path from the dock to your space with your rack dimensions in hand
- Ask to see the generator yard, UPS rooms and fuel storage
- Ask where temperature is measured and look at the readings
- Check cabinet locks, cage walls and camera coverage of your space
- Ask who answers the phone at 3 a.m. and how fast they reach your cabinet
- Ask what failed in the last 12 months and what changed afterward
- For liquid cooling, ask to see a live deployment and the CDUs that serve it

Provider	Facility and address	Tour date	Contact
A			
B			
C			

1. Location and site risk

Item	A	B	C
Outside the FEMA 100-year flood zone, and preferably the 500-year zone (check the flood map yourself)			
Seismic, hurricane and tornado exposure, and the wind and seismic design ratings the building was built to			
Distance from rail lines, highways carrying hazardous cargo, airport flight paths and chemical plants			
Local permitting climate: any data center moratorium, tax change or large-load tariff in this state or county			
Road access for staff and deliveries, and nearby hotels and food for long work sessions			
Distance and latency to your users, offices and other data centers			
Section score			

2. Building and delivery path

Item	A	B	C
Purpose-built data center, or a converted building (and what was converted)			
Floor rating for your load: slab or raised floor, in pounds per square foot and point load			
Ceiling height and clearance for containment, overhead cable trays and busway			
Loading dock with weather cover, truck size limits and dock hours			
Freight elevator size and load rating, door widths and ramps along the whole route to your space			
Secure staging and unpacking area, and storage for spares			
Shipping and receiving: who signs, how packages are logged, and how long they are held			
Section score			

3. Power

Item	A	B	C
Number of utility feeds and substations, and diverse underground entry paths			
Power available today versus planned. For planned capacity, a signed utility agreement and energization date			
UPS design (N+1, 2N or distributed redundant) and battery runtime			
Generator redundancy, on-site fuel runtime at full load, and priority refuel contracts with more than one supplier			
Concurrent maintainability: any component can be maintained without shutting down your power			
Separate A and B feeds to your cabinet, from separate UPS and distribution paths			
Voltage and circuit options (for example 208V and 415V, single and three-phase)			
Branch circuit monitoring you can see, and the power billing models offered			
Generator load testing and UPS maintenance schedules, with recent test records			
Section score			

4. Cooling

Item	A	B	C
Cooling design and redundancy (N+1 or better) and concurrent maintainability			
Supply air range (ASHRAE recommends 64.4°F to 80.6°F for most IT) and where it is measured			
Hot or cold aisle containment and blanking panel policy			
Maximum air-cooled density per cabinet the space you are offered can support			
Water source, water use and backup supply for evaporative or water-cooled systems			
Section score			

5. High density, AI and liquid cooling

For GPU clusters, neoclouds and other high-density deployments

Item	A	B	C
Maximum kW per cabinet today with air, with rear door heat exchangers and with direct-to-chip liquid cooling			
Liquid cooling delivered today, not planned: which types (rear door, direct-to-chip, immersion) and where it runs now			
Coolant distribution units (CDUs): who owns, supplies, maintains and monitors them			
Facility water supply temperature and flow per cabinet (ASHRAE liquid classes W17 to W45), and redundancy of the loop			
Secondary loop ownership, water quality and filtration, and who is liable for a leak			
Leak detection and automatic shutoff at the cabinet and under any raised floor			
Slab or floor rated for rack-scale systems: a liquid-cooled 72-GPU rack can exceed 3,000 lb fully loaded			
Busway or high-amperage power to the cabinet, and 415V availability			
A power ramp schedule that matches your GPU deliveries, with contractual ready-for-service dates and remedies			
A written responsibility matrix for power, cooling, CDUs, manifolds and hoses			
Commissioning of liquid cooling with your hardware before go-live			
Section score			

6. Network and connectivity

Item	A	B	C
Number of carriers on site, and whether the building is carrier-neutral			
Diverse fiber entry points and routes into the building			
Meet-me room access and cross connect price, installation time and annual increases			
Cloud on-ramps in the building or by fabric (AWS, Azure, Google Cloud, Oracle)			

Internet exchange access, dark fiber and links to other data centers in the metro			
Provider bandwidth, if offered: redundancy, SLA and DDoS protection			
Section score			

7. Physical security

Item	A	B	C
Perimeter fencing, vehicle barriers and controlled parking			
Security staffed on site 24/7, and whether staff are employees or contractors			
Mantraps, multi-factor or biometric access, and anti-tailgating controls			
Locked cabinets, cages or suites with individual access control			
Video coverage of entrances, halls and your space, with at least 90 days of retention			
Visitor ID checks, escort rules, access list management and log retention			
Access logs for your space available on request			
Section score			

8. Fire and environmental protection

Item	A	B	C
Early smoke detection (such as aspirating systems) in data halls			
Suppression type (pre-action sprinklers, clean agent or both) and zoning			
Fire protection aligned with NFPA 75 and 76, with inspection records			
Water and leak detection, and emergency power-off procedures			
Lightning protection and grounding			
Section score			

9. Compliance and audits

Ask for reports dated within the last 12 months that name this facility

Item	A	B	C

SOC 2 Type II report covering this facility, plus a bridge letter for any gap since the report period			
SOC 1 Type II report (issued under SSAE 18, which replaced SSAE 16 in 2017)			
ISO/IEC 27001:2022 certificate (2013 certificates expired October 31, 2025)			
PCI DSS v4.0.1 attestation as a service provider, covering physical security (v4.0.1 is the only active version)			
HIPAA: willingness to sign a business associate agreement where needed (the current Security Rule remains in force; a proposed overhaul is not final)			
HITRUST certification (CSF v11) if you are in healthcare			
NIST SP 800-53 physical controls you can inherit, for FedRAMP or government work			
Support for defense contractors' CMMC physical protection requirements, if relevant			
Uptime Institute Tier Certification of the constructed facility, or TIA-942-C rated certification (not design-only claims)			
Right to tour, audit and receive reports, and how carve-outs and exceptions in reports are handled			
Section score			

10. Operations and support

Item	A	B	C
Qualified staff on site 24/7, and their training and certifications			
Remote hands hours, scope, response times and rates			
Network operations center monitoring and how incidents are communicated			
Maintenance program, notice periods and procedures for work on live systems			
Outage history for the last 36 months, with written reason-for-outage reports			
Change management and documented operating procedures			
Section score			

11. SLA and contract terms

Use our colocation SLA and MSA templates to compare

Item	A	B	C
Written SLA with power and environmental commitments, credits and a reasonable claim window			
Credits that cover the affected services, and a chronic-failure exit			
Annual escalator, which charges it applies to and a cap			
Renewal term, notice window, early termination and relocation terms			
Billing start tied to an acceptance checklist			
Section score			

12. Growth and capacity

Item	A	B	C
Adjacent space and power for your growth, with a right of first refusal			
Campus or metro expansion plans backed by utility commitments			
Path to higher density or liquid cooling in your space later			
Section score			

13. Efficiency and sustainability

Item	A	B	C
Measured annual PUE (ISO/IEC 30134-2 method), not a design number			
Water usage effectiveness and water reporting			
Renewable energy sourcing and how it is verified			
Emissions and energy reporting the provider can share for your own reporting			
Section score			

14. Provider strength

Item	A	B	C
Ownership, financial backing and years operating data centers			
Number of facilities and other sites you could use for disaster recovery			

Customer references with similar requirements			
What happens to your contract if the provider is acquired			
Section score			

15. Customer amenities

Item	A	B	C
Work area, Wi-Fi, conference rooms and secure storage			
Parking, 24/7 building access for your staff and nearby services			
Section score			

Scorecard

Set a weight for each section (the weights should add to 100), multiply each provider's section score (0 to 3) by the weight, and total the columns. The highest possible total is 300. A high total with a red flag is still a red flag. The free Excel scorecard at colocationquotes.com/resources/checklists/data-center-checklist does this math for you.

Section	Weight	A	B	C
1. Location and site risk				
2. Building and delivery path				
3. Power				
4. Cooling				
5. High density, AI and liquid cooling				
6. Network and connectivity				
7. Physical security				
8. Fire and environmental protection				
9. Compliance and audits				
10. Operations and support				
11. SLA and contract terms				
12. Growth and capacity				
13. Efficiency and sustainability				
14. Provider strength				
15. Customer amenities				
Weighted total	**100**			

Standards in this checklist were checked in November 2026: ISO/IEC 27001:2022, PCI DSS v4.0.1, SOC reports under SSAE 18, HITRUST CSF v11, ANSI/TIA-942-C (May 2024) and the ASHRAE Thermal Guidelines, fifth edition. Confirm the current version with the provider's auditor or certifying body.

Compare the contract terms with our free SLA template and MSA template. Ready to shortlist? Get side-by-side quotes from providers that fit at colocationquotes.com/quote.